



## **Frequently Asked Questions about Human Papillomavirus (HPV) Vaccine?**

### **What is human papillomavirus (HPV)?**

HPV is a common virus that is passed from person to person through genital contact. There are about 40 types of HPV. While most HPV types cause no symptoms and go away on their own, some types can cause cervical cancer in women and other types can cause warts in the genital areas.

### **How common is HPV?**

At least half of sexually active people will get HPV at some time in their lives. Anyone who has ever had genital contact with another person can get HPV. Every year in the United States, about 6.2 million people get HPV. HPV is most common in people who are in their late teens and early 20's. Many people who have HPV may show no signs or symptoms.

### **What is the HPV vaccine?**

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) licensed a vaccine to prevent cervical cancer and other diseases caused by types of HPV for girls/women ages 9-26 years. The HPV vaccine has been tested in over 11,000 females around the world. The HPV vaccine can prevent most genital warts and most cases of cervical cancer. However this vaccine does not treat existing HPV infections or genital warts.

### **How is the HPV vaccine administered?**

The vaccine is given in 3 doses over 6-months.

- 1<sup>st</sup> dose: Now—or at a date you and your healthcare provider choose
- 2<sup>nd</sup> dose: 2 months after 1<sup>st</sup> dose
- 3<sup>rd</sup> dose: 6 months after 1<sup>st</sup> dose

### **What are side effects of the HPV vaccine?**

The HPV vaccine does not appear to have serious side effects. Common side effects may include pain, redness, swelling or itching at the injection site and mild fever.

### **Who should get the HPV vaccine?**

The HPV vaccine is recommended for 11-12-year-old girls and can be given to girls as young as 9. The vaccine is also recommended for 13-26-year-old girls/women who have not yet received the vaccine. Ideally, females should get the vaccine before they become sexually active, because they have not been exposed to HPV.

## **Who should not get the HPV vaccine?**

People who have had an allergic reaction to yeast or any other component of HPV vaccine or to an earlier dose of HPV vaccine. Life-threatening allergic reactions from vaccines are rare. Reactions could occur within a few minutes to a few hours after the vaccination. People who are ill should wait until they recover before getting the vaccine. The HPV vaccine is not recommended for boys.

Pregnant women should not get the vaccine. If a woman finds out that she is pregnant after she has started the vaccine series, she should wait until she completes her pregnancy before finishing the vaccine series.

## **Does the vaccine protect against all types of HPV?**

The vaccine does not protect against all types of HPV and it will not prevent all cases of cervical cancer or genital warts. About 30% of cervical cancers and 10% of genital warts will not be prevented by the vaccine. It is important to continue getting screened for cervical cancer (e.g., regular Pap tests).

## **How long does the HPV vaccine protection last?**

Studies have followed women for five years and found that they are still protected. More research is being done to find out how long protection will last.

## **Where can I get more information?**

- Your healthcare provider
- The New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services website:  
<http://www.nj.gov/health>
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website:  
<http://www.cdc.gov/std/hpv> or <http://www.cdc.gov/nip>
- HPV Vaccination Information Sheet:  
<http://www.cdc.gov/nip/publications/VIS/vis-hpv.pdf>
- Childhood immunization schedule:  
<http://www.cdc.gov/nip/recs/child-schedule.htm>
- Adult immunization schedule:  
<http://www.cdc.gov/nip/recs/adult-schedule.htm>

This information is intended for educational purposes only and is not intended to replace consultation with a healthcare professional.

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